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ABSTRACT

Many New Yorkers have given up on the public schools and on the chance for reform. However, the school system's new chancellor, Frank Macchiarola, seems to have both the necessary commitment to change and the administrative skills. Interim evaluations have been made of his performance, with the following results: (1) Staff Performance--good work on appointments, strong initiatives in denying tenure to supervisors, has yet to develop a plan for dealing with inadequate teachers: (2) Management and Accountability--started revamping central bureaus, revitalized direct services in high schools and in special education, has yet to improve current decentralized structure: (3) Priority Budgeting--shifted funds from educational administration to direct services for children: (4) Use of Non-Budget Resources--needs improvement, but has opened schools after regular instruction hours for community use: (5) Collective Bargaining--avoided teachers strike, but failed to confront key issues, took tough stand on negotiations with school bus drivers, but failed to develop strong public support: (6) Emphasis on Academic Achievement--has spoken of the need to ensure that all children learn and has taken first steps by establishing transitional classes for students held back a grade. Overall, although much remains to be done, Mr. Macchiarola's performance has been creditable in an extremely difficult situation. (Author/RLV)

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In introducing the October 1976 issue of *City Almanac*, we noted the "widespread talk of crisis and doom for the city's public education system" and that "severe cutbacks mandated by the ongoing fiscal stringency are having a noticeable impact on the public schools." With perhaps one exception, little has happened since then to nullify that assessment. The exception is the appointment last year of Dr. Frank Macchiarola as chancellor of the New York City public school system.

This issue offers an interim evaluation of Dr. Macchiarola's administration by David S. Seeley, coauthor of the October 1976 *City Almanac* and long one of the most incisive critics of public education in New York City. Using his previous *City Almanac* analysis as a touchstone for his "report card" on Dr. Macchiarola, Mr. Seeley assays the new chancellor's performance in the areas of staff appointments and policies, management and accountability, budgeting, use of nonbudget resources, collective bargaining, and academic achievement.

In Dr. Macchiarola, the author perceives a breath of fresh air and, possibly, a force for generating strong winds of change. It appears that the system may be starting on the long climb back to excellence. The road is arduous, but Dr. Macchiarola has demonstrated the will and commitment to make the climb, and that is a significant beginning.

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Winds of Change in New York City's Public Schools

Can Chancellor Macchiarola Set a New Course?

David S. Seeley

Many New Yorkers have given up on the public schools. The combination of seemingly intractable social problems, an ossified education bureaucracy, and powerful staff unions has caused many parents, business leaders, and foundations among others to conclude that the situation is hopeless. The failure of so many efforts at reform has entrenched the despair as deeply as the problems themselves.

There are, however, signs of change. One is the system's new chancellor, Frank Macchiarola—the first in many years who seems to have the necessary commitment to change and the administrative skill to press ahead with the massive job of turning the school system around. But can he succeed where others have failed? Macchiarola himself admits in his own extraordinary *Mid-Year Report* that no major urban school system has yet been truly successful in this effort.

Macchiarola's appointment was not an accident; it represents a public mandate for educational change. The fact that he was "politically imposed" on the system by Mayor Koch (who pressured the Board of Education into appointing his nominee on a 4 to 3 vote) has been cited as an accusation against him.[1] But in the end, it may be his main source of strength. Macchiarola is not merely a professional manager of a bureaucracy; he is the chosen instrument of a public will to change the city's schools.

In the October 1976 *City Almanac*, I argued that New York City could set the pace in urban education if changes in policy and practice were made in six areas: staff performance, management and accountability, priority budgeting, use of nonbudget resources, collective bargaining, and emphasis on academic achievement.[2] On this agenda, the new chancellor has accomplished more in his first nine months than his predecessors did in many years, but he is heading into rough waters as he nears the end of his first year.

In looking at these areas in detail, keep in mind that significant changes in school systems take time. What must be looked for are not sudden changes in every classroom but solid steps over time that are likely to lead to steady improvement.

Staff Performance

> *. . . nothing is more important to productivity or quality education than an effective staff.*[3]

Chancellor Macchiarola's most dramatic—and controversial—actions have been in the area of personnel. In his first month in office, he denied tenure to 79 principals and assistant principals for inadequate records of accomplishment—an unprecedented action in the New York City school system and one that still has the

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Interim Report Card

Frank Macchiarola, Chancellor, New York City Public School System

Area	*Comment*
Staff Performance	*Off to a strong start. Good work on appointments to top headquarters staff. Has demonstrated leadership in setting standards for performance. Has shown strong initiative in denying tenure to supervisors; however, has yet to develop a plan for dealing with inadequate teachers and tenured supervisors. No new policies for the selection and assignment of instructional and supervisory personnel.*
Management and Accountability	*High marks for start in the revamping of the central bureaus. Has much to do in revitalizing direct services in the high schools and in special education of the handicapped. Has not yet established a clear policy to improve the current decentralized structure. Has made some progress in strengthening accountability at the school level.*
Priority Budgeting	*Good beginning in supporting efforts of education interest groups to have city shift funds from educational administration to direct services for children. Performance on fiscal 1980 budget incomplete—must await clarification on where and how available funds are to be allocated.*
Use of Nonbudget Resources	*Needs improvement. One positive move in opening schools after regular instructional hours for community use, but has not laid down guidelines nor developed strategies to complement budget resources through expanded use of community and citywide institutions and talent.*
Collective Bargaining	*Performance mixed. Avoided teachers strike but, in the process, failed to confront key issues, closed out opportunities for consultation with community representatives, and found himself at cross-purposes wth the mayor, who had to reject the contract. Took tough stand on negotiations with school busdrivers, but failed to develop strong public support thereby precipitating long and disruptive strike.*
Emphasis on Academic Achievement	*Has made strong and important pronouncements on the need for the school system to ensure that all children learn and has taken first steps by establishing transitional classes for students held back in grade and reducing class size in the early grades—but has not yet revealed any follow-through plans. Missed opportunity in crisis facing high school seniors who failed new state competency exams to establish new achievement standards for all students.*
Overall Evaluation	*Frank Macchiarola shows more promise than any chancellor. He has the intelligence, commitment, and skill to do an outstanding job. Under his leadership, New York City's public schools could finally turn the corner and begin to change from a failing to a successful system. The major risks are: (1) he could be overwhelmed by the pervasive pathologies of the system; (2) he might let personal animosities get in the way of the task of realizing important educational goals; and (3) he might rely too much on managerial toughness and underestimate the importance of building a strong network of support. Overall, although much remains to be done, his performance has been creditable in an extremely difficult situation.*

chancellor in court today.

The court suits did not intimidate him. Last December, when the principal of Fort Hamilton High School was up for tenure, Macchiarola went to the school and *personally* interviewed not only the candidate, but the staff, parents, and students. Instead of granting tenure, which would almost certainly have been the result under prior chancellors, Macchiarola removed the principal.[4]

His appraisal of staff quality in his *Mid-Year Report* is the most hard-hitting ever heard from school headquarters: "Too many of those who should be serving our children are only serving themselves." He goes on to say: "There is no escape from the fact that the job of teaching requires greater talents and abilities than many of our teachers presently possess . . . . We have not only tolerated mediocrity, we have developed, congratulated and promoted it."

The chancellor was immediately—and predictably—attacked by the teachers and supervisors unions and other defenders of the status quo for "scapegoating." Yet they have not challenged the truth of his assessments. Rather, they complain that such statements, even if true, should not be uttered lest they hurt staff morale. As the chancellor himself has said, there are many hard-working, dedicated people in the system who receive little credit for their efforts and who may have been offended by his harsh words. Yet in private, some of the system's hardest-working and most professional staff members are even harsher in their assessment of present staff performance and welcome seeing the issue finally brought into the open.

The purpose of the chancellor's statements and actions is not, as one former school official claimed, to point "a firm finger of blame for the city's education disaster at the teachers."[5] On the contrary, Macchiarola's *Mid-Year Report* says the prime responsibility for improving staff performance rests "not with the teachers" but "with the administrators," who must provide the management, accountability, staff training, and leadership that will permit good teachers to teach and provide help to those who need it.

What has the chancellor done to make these changes? First, it should be pointed out for those unfamiliar with the city's public school system that its personnel policies are archaic; any reform chancellor has his work cut out for him. The main elements of a successful personnel system are: (1) a clear definition of the mission of the organization and the type of personnel needed to carry it out; (2) policies for recruiting and selecting appropriate personnel; (3) provisions for staff training, performance incentives, assistance, and supervision to ensure the best possible performance; and (4) policies for transfer and, if necessary, separation of those unable to perform adequately. The system has been seriously deficient in all four areas.

Mission and Personnel Requirements

Chancellor Macchiarola has repeatedly stated that "*all* children are educable" and that the basic mission of the system is to make sure that all are educated. So far, we have not heard from him the excuses, which past school spokesmen fell back on, that urban children cannot be educated because of poverty, broken homes, or "cultural deprivation."

The chancellor has also made clear that the staff needed to carry out this mission must include people not only with specific competencies but with commitment, a willingness to devote increased effort, and an awareness of their special responsibilities in "nurturing children." Little in the recent history of the city's public schools indicates that the system has sought these important qualities in teachers and supervisors.

Recruitment and Selection

Staff quality starts with recruitment and selection. In hiring his own headquarters staff, Macchiarola seems to have put his philosophy into practice. His top staff give the impression that they, too, believe all children can learn and that it is the schools' responsibility to see that the job is done. They are noticeably more open and accessible to parent and citizen representatives than were the staffs of previous school system heads. The main complaints heard about Macchiarola's appointees are that they are inexperienced in the ways of the New York City school bureaucracy, somewhat naive about what can be done and how to do it, and too cliquish, excluding talented and perhaps indispensable oldtimers. In handling personnel reforms, for instance, virtually none of the new top staff is familiar with the legal and political battles of the past ten years over licensing, selection, and assignment of teachers and superviors.

At the lower levels, however, the new administration has done little, as yet, to improve recruitment and selection policies. Recruitment may have received low priority until recently because, in a period of retrenchment, the system was not hiring many new teachers and supervisors. Furthermore, the most potent recruitment strategies for the city require getting New York City schools to be effective, productive, professionally oriented places to work in order to attract top-flight professionals, and this will take time.

It is not soon, however, for the system to reach out to the colleges and make clear to their officials and students that it does intend to change, that it needs committed teachers, and that it will open new routes into the system for those with talent. Many such people are lost to the teaching profession because they do not know they are wanted and are repelled by the unprofessional courses, examinations, and entry-level job experiences that are currently offered prospective teachers.

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Another weakness is that the system has not yet redefined its official job qualifications to make sure they reflect the professional and personal characteristics of leadership and commitment the chancellor has rightly said are so important for successful performance. One reason for this failure is that personnel functions are split between the Board of Education and an autonomous Board of Examiners. In his *Mid-Year Report*, the chancellor says that while this structure remains, he welcomes working with it. However, the Board of Examiners has said it would not share its job descriptions and analyses with Macchiarola's staff on the bizarre ground that if candidates knew what the system is looking for, they might take cram courses to pass the examinations! This absurd policy of secret job descriptions militates against effective cooperation within the system in the effort to translate organizational mission into an effectively functioning staff.

The policies for qualifying and selecting staff are also in disarray. For many years, the selection process was dominated by the Board of Examiners' lists of candidates ranked by examination scores. Those at the top of the lists felt entitled to the jobs. As an employer, for at least 30 years the system has exercised little judgment of whether candidates had talent for teaching or supervision. This selection process has come under attack from education groups and study findings because too many of those selected from the lists performed badly, and those who could not qualify for licensed appointments because of their lower scores performed well in "acting" and "temporary" statuses.[6] In the 1960s, the method of licensing also came under legal attack because it effectively screened out minority applicants. As late as 1969, only 1% of licensed school principals were black or Hispanic.

Over the past ten years, the state legislature and the courts have tinkered with this obsolete system, but they have not come up with an effective alternative. The 1969 legislative compromise permitting teachers to qualify through the National Teachers Exam or from *unranked* Board of Examiners' lists for the 45% of public schools with the lowest reading scores is certainly illogical and possibly unconstitutional. If the Board of Examiners' system is valid, why should it be abandoned in the neediest schools? If it is not valid, why should it be used at all?

Meanwhile, since the 1971 *Chance-Mercado* litigation, the federal courts have enjoined the Board of Examiners' exams for selecting supervisors because the board was unable to show any relationship between its examinations and job performance. Again, the school system has come up with no well-designed alternative.

Chancellor Macchiarola has not yet figured out how to solve these inherited problems. He has considered favoring a change in state law to permit hiring for all schools from unranked lists derived from new, "nondiscriminatory" examinations, but it remains unclear who would do the hiring and how the selections would be made. Meanwhile, the Board of Examiners' current $5 million yearly budget might have to be increased substantially before New York City could come close to establishing an examination system that could meet current federal standards. It is hard to justify so much money for this duplicative and ineffective system.

An alternative system for qualifying teachers might be to use the National Teachers Examination (NTE) for *all* city schools (not just the 45% with the lowest reading scores). Although the NTE has come under fire from civil rights groups in the South for screening out minority applicants, it would have several advantages over the Board of Examiners' system: (1) it would facilitate recruitment because the exam is given often and all over the country; (2) it would cost the city nothing since applicants pay the costs of the exam; and (3) it would have a better chance of surviving litigation since the test has passed muster in federal court as meeting federal nondiscrimination guidelines. Furthermore, there are enough minority applicants who could meet responsible NTE standards to provide the city with an integrated pool of qualified teaching applicants.

Even more difficult than the question of how to "qualify" candidates, however, are the issues of selecting and assigning teachers from among those who are "qualfied." Again, there is a vacuum. The old system of assignment from ranked lists is almost certainly doomed because of its educational ineffectiveness (people are finally admitting that test scores above the qualifying level have little relation to teaching talent), and because the system is under federal mandate from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to unrank the lists. But if teachers are not selected by ranked lists (of course, there was always favoritism and manipulation of the list system) some other way must be found to decide whom to hire from the so-called qualified pool and where to assign them.

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) has suggested a lottery because it would reduce the chances of favoritism while gradually integrating the staff (another OCR mandate). But a lottery has obvious, overwhelming disadvantages since it would select and assign teachers without regard to their skills or appropriateness for a given instructional situation. Further, a lottery would absolve the school principal of responsibility for the quality of education in his or her school. When results are poor, the principal can always blame them on the poor quality of the teachers assigned. While it is unlikely that New York City public school principals will be given the authority to select their staffs that is enjoyed in some of the best private and suburban public schools, research and experience point to the need for more accountability at the school level.

But if not a lottery, then what? Macchiarola has not only failed to come up with answers but as yet has no discernible procedure for finding answers. And time is running out. He faces a fall deadline for OCR compliance that could mean disruption and racial antagonism if it is not dealt with intelligently.

The problem stems from at least two decades of gross neglect of staff integration. In 1977, OCR found extensive staff segregation and threatened to cut off federal funds. To persuade OCR to withdraw its threat, in 1977 the board signed an agreement to integrate the teaching staff in each district by September 1979 and in each school by September 1980 to "reflect, within a range of 5%, the racial-ethnic composition of the system's teacher corps." Because of the failure to take effective action up to now, only massive reassignment of teachers could bring about this degree of staff desegregration.

The board might get OCR to modify the agreement, but OCR would have little incentive to do so without seeing a reasonable alternative in place which would both integrate staff and begin to remedy

the other major denial of educational rights – ineffective schooling. Without a solution soon, the public school system faces major trouble this fall.

Training, Performance Incentives, and Supervision

Staff performance is happily less controversial than selection and assignment. But it is no less important, and Chancellor Macchiarola has taken some useful steps. His *Mid-Year Report* emphasizes the need for staff training, and he has already instituted a management training program for newly appointed high school principals. He is operating on the sound assumptions that an urban school principal has one of the most complex and difficult jobs imaginable and that *any* candidate – no matter how well qualified – has much to learn.

While trying to institute better inservice training, Macchiarola has simultaneously pared some of the current ineffective inservice training policies by disallowing salary increments for what he has called "fraudulent" correspondence courses. This step at least deals with an important problem, but it does not get to its heart. Actually some correspondence courses can be valuable, while many on-campus courses, for which millions of dollars are paid in salary increments, are worthless for improving instruction. The Fleischmann Commission, set up in 1969 by Governor Rockefeller to assess elementary and secondary education in the state, estimated that $210 million a year was spent statewide on salary increments for inservice courses.[7] But little has been done about the problem since, either in New York City or elsewhere.

Often the best training for teachers comes in the form of effective assistance on the job. This concept receives considerable attention in the *Mid-Year Report*. But the only specific action Macchiarola discusses is cooperation with the UFT in the development of the new federally funded "teacher centers," where teachers could exchange ideas and techniques with their peers in a nonsupervisory atmosphere. If the program succeeds in helping teachers perform better, it could give the teachers union, which controls the program, a more professional image. Much more, however, needs to be done.

The National Council of Assistance to Classroom Teachers, a group of educators who have been concerned for several years about the professional isolation in which most school systems leave their beleaguered teachers, has advocated a system of teacher-consultants – perhaps one per school – who serve *at the request of the teacher* and have no authority for rating performance (so teachers would be more inclined to ask for help). This idea has been successful where it has been tried.[8]

When it comes to performance incentives, Macchiarola has set a high standard for himself and his immediate staff. The climate at 110 Livingston Street has changed from ineffectiveness and indifference to a commitment "to get the job done." But it is not yet clear how this spirit will spread beyond the top staff, most of whom are new. Performance incentives down through the ranks are still dominated by old habits, bureaucratic values of conformity, and "going along to get along." The idea that a school professional's primary loyalty is to students and their parents is still a long way off.

One way to implement new policies is through supervisors. Successful school system management is a combination of high standards, leadership, monitoring, and assistance. The lesson keeps coming home that the *people* supervising – much more than policies or mandates from above – are the keys to success. Macchiarola's success on performance incentives will depend more on *who* he brings in to supervise than on formal policies. In this area, Macchiarola has shown insight and courage.

Transfer and Dismissal

The New York City school system is notorious for its unwillingness or inability to remove ineffective staff. Classroom teachers are seldom removed and principals almost never removed; therefore, the chancellor's denial of tenure to 79 principals and assistant principals was significant. Otherwise, because of their three years' service, these supervisors would have proceeded "automatically" to virtually lifetime appointments. In his *Mid-Year Report*, the chancellor says he will insist that tenure remain a matter of professional judgment, rather than the automatic job right it was assumed to be in the past. "We cannot endeavor to evaluate our students and at the same time permit colleagues to escape similar evaluation. To do so denies basic justice to students and to fellow professionals who then see minimally effective performance as the acceptable standard of the system."

These are strong words. The chancellor was immediately brought into court for his denial of tenure and, although he has won the only case yet decided, enforcing performance standards will not be easy.

If the chancellor has had this much of a challenge in trying to evaluate staff coming up for tenure, which is the system's minimal *legal* responsibility, imagine how much more difficult it will be for him to develop a comprehensive framework for regular evaluation of tenured personnel. Yet this clearly is the central board's responsibility for high school and headquarters personnel, and the community school boards' responsibility for elementary, intermediate, and junior high schools.

The chancellor recognizes the difficulty. Careers and feelings are at stake. But since children's careers and feelings are also at stake, the system must be uncompromising in taking steps to remove ineffective staff. The chancellor has started his term with the correct instincts on this issue. He must not be dissuaded by the argument that it will hurt staff morale. As I pointed out in the October 1976 *City Almanac*, if ineffective personnel are removed fairly, "staff morale will be enhanced, not destroyed; nothing is more discouraging to conscientious teachers and supervisors than incompetent or nonfunctioning colleagues."

Management and Accountability

The difference was what happened at the school level.[9]

Chancellor Macchiarola has two types of responsibility: direct responsibility for headquarters, high schools, and education of the handicapped; and indirect responsibility for elementary, intermediate, and junior high schools, which are partially under the control of the 32 community school boards.

Headquarters

In the past, the bureaucracy at 110 Livingston Street has made headlines with its inefficiency and, from time to time, corruption. With the city's fiscal crisis, central functions have come under severe at-

tack for waste. Chancellor Macchiarola's first step in changing the situation was one commonly used in industry but almost never used in the New York City school system. He installed new directors for almost all central bureaus, including school buildings, personnel, management, planning, evaluation, information, law, high schools, special education, community school district affairs, transportation, and federal and state funded programs—the most thorough shakeup of the system's top brass in recent history.

It is too early to tell whether the new directors will improve administration or whether the chancellor can create "team spirit," of which he speaks so eloquently in his *Mid-Year Report*, between the new top staff and the old-line middle management and support staff, whose knowledge and experience are so important to achieving the chancellor's objectives.

It also remains to be seen whether the new management information system the chancellor has called for can be installed and made to work. Over the last ten years, the Board of Education has announced various new management technologies, from "management by objective" to "zero based budgeting." But such innovations too often become goals in themselves instead of means for realizing educational objectives. Perhaps with more clearly defined goals, management techniques can become more functional educationally.

High Schools

The chancellor is directly responsible for 75 regular high schools, 22 vocational high schools, 4 specialized academic high schools (such as Bronx High School of Science), and 10 alternative high schools. Some indication of the dismal state of affairs in the past management of these schools is that well into this school year, the system could not say how many seniors in each high school had failed the state's new basic competency examinations required for graduation, whether they had been so notified, what kind of remedial programs, if any, had been provided, and what other steps were being taken to deal with basic deficiencies.

The new chancellor's first move was to bring in new top management: a new director of the high school division and replacements for three of the five borough high school superintendents. The new director, Nathan Quinones, has already taken some steps to improve the high school program, such as implementing the chancellor's orders to increase instructional time (by reducing time lost, for example, because of scheduling and examinations) and ordering principals to stop "locking out" students who are late to school. He is also putting into effect a system of "school profiles" to provide each principal with data on student performance, attendance, and supervision.

It is too early to tell whether the new school profiles will be used effectively to improve performance, but their availability is a major accomplishment. And the chancellor's close scrutiny of tenure appointments gives promise that accountability will be much tighter in the future. But the real test will come with those tenured principals who prove incompetent despite renewed efforts at inservice training and supervision.

Education Of The Handicapped

If high school management was in disarray when Macchiarola took office, education of the handicapped was in shambles. Under the 1969 decentralization law, the operation of schools and classes for handicapped children was assigned to the central administration. This "side function" of the Board of Education is actually an extensive empire serving 55,000 children through 29 special schools, over 4,000 classes scattered in school buildings throughout the system, six special bureaus for different classifications of handicapped children (e.g., retarded mental development, speech impairment, emotional disability) and an elaborate system for evaluating, classifying, and assigning children to special programs or to tuition-reimbursed private schools—some as far away as Texas.

When Macchiarola took over in June 1978, although the state education commissioner had ruled in 1973 that *all* handicapped children must be educated, some 13,000 had still not been placed in appropriate programs. The situation was so bad that the commissioner held up $7.5 million in state funds because, not only was there no compliance, there was not even a *plan* for compliance. By January 1979, the new chancellor had satisfied the state that he at least had a plan, and the funds were released.

Macchiarola is under the gun in special education because state and federal officials are still threatening to withhold funds if he does not remedy the present extreme failure to provide services. His efforts to speed up evaluation and placements, however, do not yet reflect any clear plan for long-overdue reforms in pupil evaluation program design.

The improvements, thus far, have been *ad hoc*. Macchiarola has made the quality and scope of special education one of his major concerns and has assigned one of his personal assistants to the area, instead of leaving it only to a separate bureau. The aide reviews and initiates special education policies and programs administered by the special education division. This intervention has improved both the disposition of particular cases and some procedures. Macchiarola has also won a $1 million federal grant for a Board of Education training program in pupil evaluation, which could include program planning to devise more useful evaluation approaches at the school level.

The chancellor's most important action on long-term change in special education, was his commission of a major study of the present system. The study, by City University Professor Alan Gartner, includes an extensive review and evaluation of the system and a thorough "reconceptualization" of integrating special education with school-based "regular" education programs. This administrative redesign would use, in Gartner's terms, "school-based services for many handicapped children currently referred and reassigned out, and district-cluster services for children who need more specialized or intensive help." The central administration would retain monitoring, finance, and curriculum development functions.

But major questions remain: Will the chancellor have the political skill and courage required to prevent an entrenched bureaucracy, powerful parent groups wary of mainstreaming handicapped children into regular classes, and teachers and administrators frightened of new responsibilities from scuttling efforts to revamp the special education system? Will he and his appointees have the wisdom and skill to develop, implement, and finance the new programs needed to educate heterogeneous groups of handicapped and non-handicapped children as required by law?

New federal legislation for the handicapped mandates the essential attitude toward education detailed elsewhere in this article. With very few exceptions, every child can learn in a program geared to his learning style and special needs, and parents, children, schools, and community groups must cooperate to achieve this goal. The chancellor's ability to implement this legal mandate for special education could be a measure of his capacity to follow through for all children where the mandate, although moral rather than legal, is no iess clear.

As this article goes to pr:ss, the chancellor has named a new director of special education, Dr. Jerry C. Gross, who comes from Illinois with a national reputation in the field. Since many decisions in this area have been awaiting a new director, there is hope for progress in the coming months.

Decentralization

While the chancellor has direct control over headquarters, high schools, and special education, his control of elementary, intermediate, and junior high schools is affected by what the Fleischmann Commission called the "impenetrable thicket" of conflicting authority and jurisdiction resulting from the decentralization law. Those who maintain that decentralization hasn't worked ignore the fact that the state legislature set up only a slightly decentralized—and highly confused—system. The central bureaucracy retains control over most of the budget, personnel, collective bargaining, purchasing, and building maintenance functions that make up the core of the management of any school system.

The community school boards have power to hire the district superintendent and to select principals from central personnel lists, but the districts' influence over programs is constrained by central board policies and procedures. Further, the districts get little training, auditing, and management assistance, contrary to recommendations by Mayor Lindsay's Advisory Panel on School Decentralization (the Bundy panel) and other advocates of decentralization. [10]

Chancellor Macchiarola, who was president of a community school board before he became chancellor, has said he believes in decentralization and wants to make it work better. But he has not yet said specifically how he will accomplish this goal. He took strong action in superseding Community School Board No. 5 in Central Harlem, where the local board and superintendent were at loggerheads, and the education program was in jeopardy. Although attacked by some as violating decentralization, such public monitoring and intervention for specified defaults may be healthier for a decentralized system than the day-to-day obstruction by the central bureaucracy that has characterized the system. The state education commissioner can and has superseded defaulting upstate school boards without upsetting the system of local control that exists outside New York City. The problem now developing in District 5 is that, having stepped into this messy situation, the chancellor has let it drift instead of getting the district back on course educationally.

Some of the chancellor's initiatives for strengthening elementary schools, such as tougher promotion policies, transitional classes for students held back, and smaller class size in the early grades, may raise more serious fears of "recentralization," but in these cases, the chancellor has given the community boards the option of following the new central policies or devising their own alternatives. For the first time since the decentralization law was passed, there may be serious experimentation with ways to achieve a productive interplay between local authority and initiative and centralized monitoring and control. The chancellor has, for instance, authorized an experiment in local management of school building maintenance so principals can get repairs quickly and effectively, instead of waiting months for action from a central bureaucracy.

School-Level Management

One important improvement in the accountability structure that can be initiated without a change in the state law may finally be developing. Recommended by the City Club, the Public Education Association (PEA), and the Fleischmann Commission among others, the idea of greater accountability at the *school level*, is gaining official sanction through three routes.

First, the New York Urban Coalition's Local School Development proposal for comprehensive and participatory planning at the school level, which has been developed through negotiation with the unions and parent and civic groups, has been accepted by Macchiarola for an extensive trial in the fall of 1979 in at least 30 schools. Under the proposal, the board will allot time for teacher participation in the planning sessions and provide training and technical assistance resources.

Second, the state Board of Regents' New York City Project, which has sponsored intensive meetings of virtually all the city's education agencies and organizations for over a year to hammer out an agenda for improving the city's public schools, has concluded that school-level accountability, with emphasis on improved instruction in basic skills and involvement of community resources, is the highest priority for action (*not* to the exclusion of decentralized *district* authority, as erroneously reported in the press).

Third, the chancellor's new special assistant for instruction, Ronald Edmonds, has developed his own School Improvement Plan, which is intended to focus on individual schools and help them to improve any or all of the five key elements of effective management: administrative style, instructional emphasis, teacher expectations, school climate, and measurement of student progress.

This new emphasis on the school as the crucial unit of improved instruction will require cooperation from all participants—parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and district and central officials. Most important, however, it demands that principals no longer function as minor managerial bureaucrats but as educational *leaders*.[11] Effective principals have always played this role, but often without the support—and sometimes over the opposition—of the school system. It remains to be seen whether the principals and the Macchiarola administration will be able to bring about the changed attitudes and behavior needed to accomplish this goal.

Taming the Lay Board

While many of the new chancellor's management and accountability reforms are still untried or untested, Macchiarola, within days of taking office, made one significant change, which eluded his predecessors for decades. He has apparently gotten the Board of Education to stop trying to *administer* the school system and to confine itself to policymaking. Whether

he accomplished this because the board had come to see how counterproductive its meddling was or because he established new ground rules simply by the strength of his personality, the change is notable, especially in light of the fact that he was appointed by a 4-3 vote.

A two-year extension of Macchiarola's contract, five months before his original one-year term expired, suggests that the board is satisfied, at least thus far, with the new division of responsibilities. The board shows no sign of wanting to regain the kind of administrative power it wielded in the first years under the decentralization law, when it ran the school system like a junta. In fact, the danger may now lie in the other direction. The chancellor is seizing so much initiative that the board might begin to neglect its policy duties. It seems to be little involved, for instance, in the discussion of the new student promotion policies designed to end "social promotions" whereby students are passed because of their age, not their achievement. Since this area is fraught with controversial policy issues, one might have thought the board would reserve these decisions to itself. Instead, it has left the development of the new policies to the chancellor and a task force representing parents, unions, and civic groups.

The line between policy and administration is traditionally fuzzy in education. The best one can hope for may be a productive interplay between strong administrative leadership by the chancellor and strong lay representation through the board. While some may complain that Macchiarola is taking too much initiative, he, nevertheless, seems to have struck a more workable balance than his predecessors.

Priority Budgeting

The principle is simple . . . spend the money where it will do the most good. [12]

Budget policy is not a fascinating topic for most people, but like personnel policy, it often has more influence on what happens in the schools than curriculum decisions—particularly when $3 billion are at stake in a time of serious fiscal readjustment. Chancellor Macchiarola, a former deputy executive director of the Emergency Financial Control Board (EFCB), appears to be more aware of this than his predecessors at 110 Livingston Street. As a start, he installed his chief aide from the EFCB, Richard Halverson, as his deputy chancellor.

One of Macchiarola's most dramatic breaks with his predecessors was his appearance, a few weeks before he took office, at a Board of Estimate budget hearing to urge that funds be shifted from administration to direct services for children. Although the PEA and the Educational Priorities Panel have pushed for years for such action, the Board of Education and previous chancellors always resisted. In 1977 and 1978, the panel, in desperation, finally persuaded the Board of Estimate to make some of the needed shifts—over the objections of the central school board. For the 1979 budget, Macchiarola not only urged such shifts but announced how the funds would be spent: for transitional classes for students held back, for smaller classes in the early grades, and for reopening school buildings in the afternoons and evenings.

Symbolically, the chancellor's initiative was encouraging. His budget request for fiscal 1980, however, indicates that the system's budget policies may not have changed fundamentally. The old budget lines were left unchanged with money added to cover inflation and some new programs. Because of the heavy pressure from the mayor for the Board of Education to cut its budget, the chancellor claimed that he could not show in the budget how funds for lower-priority expenses might be shifted to higher-priority purposes for fear that the mayor would simply cut the funds out altogether.

In budgeting, the New York City school system is like most government agencies. Macchiarola says in his *Mid-Year Report*:

> We have in many cases measured the success or importance of programs by the amount of money spent or by the number of persons employed. Such measures have actually operated to drive expenditures upward so that at the present time our city leads major American cities in the per capita money spent by state and local government.

The chancellor emphasizes not only that this situation cannot be allowed to continue if New York is to compete with other cities, but also that the school system must lead in the drive to change past habits. Such waste, he says, "is entirely at odds with the values that we teach and the values that we urge children to adopt."

We have let the amount of money available determine basic educational goals. Goals should be set *first*, then means devised to attain them *within available resources*. We should not accept the excuse that there is not enough money to educate our children adequately. To do so is to say that education is a luxury, not a necessity. As the chancellor points out in his *Mid-Year Report*, "we are sorely mistaken if we believe that increased funding provides a solution to the problem of lack of commitment."

Use of Nonbudget Resources

I am interested . . . in making schools and schoolteachers more effective; and they will not be more effective until they become aware of and actually engage these other educators. [13]

One of the characteristics of a successful school system is its capacity to identify and use nonbudget resources—starting with the students themselves—to accomplish educational goals. Urban school bureaucracies have been particularly obtuse in failing to use such nonbudget resources as parents, community groups, museums, and volunteers. So long as funding appeared endless, there was little incentive for them to do so. The incentives instead were ever larger budgets and more powerful bureaucratic empires. [14] However, with fiscal crises in the public sector, taxpayer revolts, and increasing pressure for educational outcomes, the problem becomes how to get the job done with what is available. In such circumstances, nonbudget resources become more important.

In this regard, Chancellor Macchiarola has taken an important step—opening school buildings after instructional hours for use by community organizations. This new policy may not seem earthshaking, but it shows how forceful leadership can quickly change a bureaucratic practice—once clear goals are set. Community groups had complained for years about the school system's not allowing buildings to be used after school hours. Mayor Koch had addressed these complaints during his election campaign, and, as mentioned earlier, one of Macchiarola's first acts, even before his appointment as chancellor, was to recommend to the Board of Estimate

that funds shifted from administration be spent on keeping school buildings open for community use.

For the first several months of the program there was considerable confusion. But by midyear, the board had published a directory of the schools that would be open and for what hours. Even though some confusion remains, a new policy has been launched, and a relatively small expenditure to keep the schools open has greatly expanded youth services in the city. Many private and voluntary groups need only space in order to operate, and they add to the total pool of educational resources a sizeable number of volunteers, as well as opportunities for cross-age contacts and the kind of community spirit that can make the educational process more than just a bureaucratic exercise.

Beyond the opening of schools after hours, the system has done little to utilize nonbudget resources. In the October 1976 *City Almanac*, I recommended not only better use of out-of-school resources but also more options for students and more integration of school services with other government and voluntary youth services. Options capitalize on students themselves as a resource because students are more likely to be motivated in programs *they* have chosen.

The Board of Education in recent years has expanded the number and variety of options, but the record is spotty. In the case of the ten alternative high schools, for example, some schools show considerable promise; others are floundering. But Macchiarola's administration has decided to concentrate first on making the regular schools work, so alternative schools remain the system's stepchildren. The needs of the best of them are ignored, while the weak ones are neither brought up to par nor closed.

Long-existing options—such as vocational schools, specialized high schools, "cooperative" education (a work-study program)—need more attention since many students are not benefiting from the regular high schools. Indeed, half of their students are dropping out before graduation; many of them could profit from alternative programs. But to open such programs to them, the board and central administration must develop a *policy* on options and alternatives and expand the range and number of those available, once procedures have been worked out to ensure quality control and to help young people choose wisely from among the available options.

Proposals for integrating youth services more effectively with educational programs have been around for a long time. There was a flurry of activity in the mid-1960s when federal money was available to promote such things as "multiservice centers" and "Model Cities coordinating councils." These ideas have considerable merit—if they can be made to work. Problems such as drugs, crime, unemployment, mental illness, and family difficulties are usually related, but the services that deal with them are provided by separate bureaucracies. Not much has happened, however, to change the basic vertical structure of service bureaucracies in New York City. And the public school system is among the worst offenders for lack of cooperation with other agencies. [15]

Macchiarola has not yet addressed this problem seriously. An experimental program initiated before he came into office, called Cities-in-Schools, brings additional youth workers into two city schools (Julia Richmond High School in Manhattan and J.S. 22 in the Bronx). If fully implemented, Cities-in-Schools would reassign staff from a number of city agencies, such as probation, recreation, and mental health, to work as a school-based team. It is questionable that other city agencies would be willing to reassign staff on more than a pilot basis, especially during a period of tight budgets. But if the idea proves effective, strong leadership by the mayor and the school chancellor might bring about some positive changes.

Meanwhile, there is no reason why there should not be much more cooperation among agencies without a reassignment of staff to the school system. For example, Joint Action for Children, a coalition of education and child care organizations, has explored whether the community planning boards could help coordinate youth services at the local level, including developing better relationships between these services and the district school boards. The approach holds promise, but Macchiarola has not yet turned his attention in this direction.

New York City has the greatest array of cultural, intellectual, commercial, artistic, and communications resources in the world. While a few excellent school programs now take advantage of these resources, school authorities will have to take a different approach to the educational process to begin to see the potential of weaving these resources into a "total learning community." [16] But if it were done, New York City could have an education system surpassing those of even the wealthiest suburbs.

Collective Bargaining

It will be necessary for us to restore many of the prerogratives of management that have been surrendered inappropriately . . . . [17]

Personnel costs account for 70%-80% of the school system's operating budget. In the past, personnel budget and management decisions were made through the formal budgetary process. Today, however, many of these decisions are made at the bargaining table and through a complex process of arbitration hearings, decisions, and appeals. This is a whole new ball game for educators, and successful public education, especially in the big cities, will increasingly depend on how well management learns to play.

Macchiarola has not yet had much opportunity to show how well he can play this game. Collective bargaining since he took office has been handled primarily by the city under its "coalition bargaining" arrangements for negotiating with all municipal unions at one time. Nevertheless, Macchiarola did run into a serious imbroglio on the 1978-80 teachers contract.

Macchiarola did not enter the negotiations as a neophyte. He was intimately involved in the EFCB's action to hold up the 1975-77 UFT contract because it violated the city's new fiscal standards. (Because of Macchiarola's role in holding up this contract, UFT head Albert Shanker fought his appointment as chancellor, costing Mayor Koch considerable political capital to get Macchiarola appointed.)

Yet, to the surprise of many, soon after he was appointed, Macchiarola hastily and secretly negotiated a settlement with the UFT in June 1978, following the citywide coalition agreement. The settlement, like the other city-union contracts, did not call for any management improvements. It did, however, include a money package that Mayor Koch, after months of be-

hind-the-scenes maneuvering, finally rejected in February 1979 because, he claimed, the provision to annualize the salaries of 10,000 paraprofessionals represented by the UFT would cost an additional $12 million a year.

There are various explanations as to how the situation became so entangled, but the result was not a high point of the Macchiarola–or the Koch–administration. After all the mayor's pronouncements about being tough with the city unions, we had a proposed UFT contract with millions of dollars in extra pension and paraprofessional costs. In light of the fiscal crisis, these costs would almost certainly have to be paid for by cutting services for children. Increased pension costs, because they do not have to be paid for immediately, are the easiest for politicians to agree to. This had been a notorious bargaining practice of past mayors, which the Koch administration had promised to end. Yet here were more increased pension costs.

To compound the pension question, annualizing the salaries of paraprofessionals would entail including them also in the pension system. Macchiarola and the UFT argued that these additional costs are paid for from federal funds and, therefore, should not be considered part of the guideline calculation. But Koch was concerned that Victor Gotbaum would almost certainly demand similar benefits for the members of his union who were paraprofessionals. This would further inflate costs, and Koch did not buy the idea that federal funds don't count. (As of this writing, the city and the UFT have agreed to submit the paraprofessional question to the Office of Collective Bargaining for arbitration.)

The teacher increases, which permitted the union to apportion a share larger than the 4% guideline to the teachers with the most seniority, were approved once city budget officials satisfied themselves that the total would not exceed what would have been the cost had the 4% annual increase been spread evenly over all teachers –less an amount to cover the increased pension costs during the contract period. The question of how to pay for the future costs of increased pensions resulting from higher salaries in the final year before retirement was left to another day.

The contract imbroglio provides a good lesson in the risks involved in hasty and secret agreements arrived at with no opportunity for public discussion. Even with the media publicity of Koch's rejection of the original contract, the public still doesn't know the costs of the new contract. While there is general agreement that 4% was a modest increase compared with past settlements and in light of the rate of inflation, few people realize that the highest-paid teachers–regardless of merit –now earn over $25,000, with fringe benefits bringing the total cost to over $33,000 a year. The increases in salary, benefit, social security, and other staff costs more than outweigh the Board of Education budget "cut" for fiscal 1980. Once again, the budget is being increased to cover higher salary and benefit costs, while services to children are being cut.

The best that can be said about the 1978 UFT negotiations is that, at least, it allowed the school year to open without labor strife. It may also have laid the groundwork for building new relationships with the teachers union by modifying the traditional "we against them" psychology, which has been so damaging to education.

The time is ripe for a new relationship. Teacher unionism, far as it has come in 20 years, is now bumping up against uncomfortable fiscal and political realities. With Proposition 13 and the taxpayer revolt, the public has announced that it is fed up with paying more and more for less and less. Teachers themselves are discovering that while increased pay and pensions are desirable, good relationships with parents and the public at large are also important "working conditions." Furthermore, the "oppressed worker" image is wearing thin, and more attention is being given to the negative aspects of bargaining with teachers. Even Myron Lieberman, one of the strongest advocates of teacher unionism ten years ago, has strongly condemned teacher bargaining as undemocratic and harmful to education. [18]

Teacher contract negotiations in New York City won't disappear, but they could change significantly in the coming years. Parent and civic groups have shown increasing interest in subjecting the bargaining issues to more public discussion and in holding government officials accountable for their bargaining performance. As yet, there is no strong movement for bargaining in public, as is required in some states, nor to add "third parties" to sit at the bargaining table in addition to the three representatives of the community school boards who now participate under provisions of the decentralization law. There is, however, a determination to prevent the repetition of such situations as the secret negotiation of a new midwinter vacation without consulting with parents or the bargaining of benefits without knowing whether the funds needed to pay for them will have to be taken from educational services.

Chancellor Macchiarola has not yet set a policy on more public discussion of contract issues. His hurried agreement on the 1978-80 UFT contract effectively precluded any public discussion of the money and management proposals that community school boards had worked out after extensive consulation with parents and principals. This may have reflected a city administration agreement in the coalition bargaining to keep the status quo on working conditions and management improvements. The issue was unfortunately couched by the city in terms of "givebacks," which made it easier for the unions to resist even discussing them.

In the future, at least in public education, more fruitful progress may come from less adversarial discussions of those aspects of the contract and of teacher relationships that are in the interests of *everyone* to change. It serves no one's interest, for instance, to have teachers, who have no talent for these jobs, assigned as college advisers or remedial teachers just because of seniority or rotation requirements. Other means should be found to prevent favoritism without damaging students' interests and the public's confidence in the schools.

Academic Achievement

Without doubt, the matter of gravest and most pressing importance is the problem of student achievement. [19]

In the final analysis, Chancellor Macchiarola's success will hinge not so much on his straightening out 110 Livingston Street, improving budget policy, or getting a grip on collective bargaining. People's patience is at an end with public schools that fail to teach students the most basic skills of reading, writing, and math. The drive for improved academic standards

has become nationwide. Within the last four years, 34 states, including New York, have taken action to ensure that students come out of school with at least some basic skills.[20]

When it comes to its primary function, the New York City school system has the same problem as systems in virtually every other city. By the time they reach high school, thousands of young people are leaving school without the most elementary academic skills. This year, 15% of the city's 50,000 high school seniors had not passed the state's new sixth-grade minimum competency tests required for graduation. Half of every class has dropped out even before reaching the time for graduation. In short, urban public education in America is, as John Holt put it, "a failure and a disaster."

Chancellor Macchiarola has come in at a time when this disaster is no longer being tolerated. The urban education "crisis" is not news. But Macchiarola's predecessors had the benefit of the public's slow reaction. They could get away with periodic announcements of new pilot programs, accountability committees, or "vigorous thrusts" toward open education. Liberally dosed with social science "evidence" that poor children can't learn anyway, public apathy, and too much trust in professional expertise, the crisis—and the failure—persisted from year to year without a real solution.

Now, the chits are being called in. Macchiarola will have to deliver, as will his counterparts in other cities. The next several years will tell whether the public will continue to place its confidence in our present system of public education or turn to alternatives. Proponents of vouchers and tuition tax credits are already gearing up in anticipation that public education will not meet the challenge.[21]

Macchiarola's response has been stronger than that of his predecessors, but it is not yet clear or innovative. His most direct action on academic standards has been the transitional classes. For years, the system has either promoted students regardless of their academic achievement or retained them to repeat the unsuccessful grade. This policy has fueled the disaster of high school students who cannot read, write, or calculate. The transition classes are smaller (15-20 students) than the norm, and instruction focuses on alternative strategies in an effort to ensure that the methods that failed are not repeated. Built into the program are elements long advocated by many critics as vital to the success of any education program—on-going inservice training, close collaboration between parent and teacher, and individualized instruction. Parent-teacher workshops, newsletters, a telephone hotline, and a teachers "transitional class club," are some of the features.

In February 1979, a preliminary report prepared by the board's Transitional Class Evaluation Unit noted that pupil attendance was higher and that participants were enthusiastic, despite some "manageable" problems such as the lack of paraprofessional assistance and a lag in implementing the parent participation and teacher-training components.[22]

Some complain that the transitional class program was implemented too hastily. It was. Macchiarola came into office July 1, 1978, and ordered the new program into effect by September. There was not enough time for adequate staff training, and the staff selected were not always those best equipped to help these particular students. There have also been complaints of too much dictation from headquarters; some schools and districts claim they had their own, more effective methods for facilitating pupil progress. The program was supposed to permit local options, but pressure for conformity to the centralized plan forced some school and district officials to go forward with programs in which they had little confidence. Despite these complaints, however, the chancellor's policy must be seen as significant in one respect: It signalled his intention to make sure that students *learn*.

A second action by the chancellor manifesting his emphasis on academic achievement was his appointment of Ronald Edmonds as special assistant for instruction. Edmonds was Michigan's Deputy Commissioner of Education and then director of a Carnegie Foundation-funded study of public schools that succeed with children from low-income families; more recently, he was on the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He brings to the highest level of the New York City school system the clearly enunciated belief that all children can learn and that it is the job of the school system to see to it that *every* school achieves this goal.

To this end, as mentioned above, he has proposed a "school improvement program" to effect fundamental change in the New York City schools.

But do changes in promotion policies and a new special assistant with a School Improvement Program portend changes that have eluded the system for years? Obviously, it is easier said than done, and skeptics are already saying worse. One former top school official, "retired" by Macchiarola when he came into office, has written to the *New York Times* that although "Mayor Koch and Herman Badillo vied in shouting for a twelfth-grade reading level for all high school graduates," their new "politically imposed chancellor" is "back-pedaling furiously to avoid the establishment of any minimum competency standards" and is calling even the state's sixth-grade level graduation requirement 'ill-conceived and hasty.'" The burden of his complaint was that Macchiarola's predecessor, Irving Anker, had done all that could be done to turn around "a school system serving increasing numbers of learning-handicapped children in the face of unprecedented bugetary restraints," and that little could be expected from "a chancellor beholden to the mayor for his position."[23] This could be dismissed as the sour grapes of an ousted official except that the sentiments expressed—the assumption that nothing really can be done and the hostility to *political* intervention in education—are widespread.

Educators have scoffed at Mayor Koch for not knowing that half the twelfth-graders by definition must score below grade level and for thinking that just adopting a policy against social promotions will solve educational problems. But the mayor may have the last laugh. He may not know education terminology, but he knows something many educators have not grasped: The public is fed up with schools that fail to teach students basic skills. There is power behind this movement to change education, which has been lacking in the scores of commission reports, hundreds of "remedial" efforts, and billion-dollar programs announced in recent years. Whether under the banner of "back to basics" or "minimum competency," politicians, legislatures, and state boards of education across the country are responding to public pressure.

Macchiarola has yet to show how he

will respond to this movement. At times, he seems to recognize its potential to help him carry out his mission; at other times, like many other school officials, he seems to resent outside pressure. He has expressed personal hostility toward those public officials most outspoken in demanding better schools—for example, Regents Kenneth Clark (the only black on the Board of Regents) and Louis Yavner and Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo—to the point where the chancellor no longer has a working relationship with them.

Macchiarola got caught in an unfortunate disagreement over the implementation of the new minimum competency requirements. The Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund, the NAACP, the United Parents Associations, and many other organizations and educators urged that implementation of the new requirements be delayed because they were unfair to seniors who had not been taught properly. Clark, Yavner, and Badillo, in agreement with the PEA and the Urban League, argued that to award diplomas to those who cannot read or do basic math was no solution. Granting that the school system had served these students badly, and, in particular, had done little to use the new policy's three-year lead time constructively, the three officials felt that the proper response had to be to help the students gain the skills they needed not only for a diploma but also for employment and self-respect. To award diplomas or "certificates of achievement" as a compromise (as suggested by the state education commissioner) would only perpetuate the system's avoidance of its primary responsibilities to students.

Macchiarola originally sided firmly with those who wanted implementation of the competency requirement postponed, and he pressed the case strongly with the Board of Regents. But when the regents made clear that they did not intend to back off from their requirement, Macchiarola agreed to a crash program to help seniors pass the test. He also announced his backing for the Competency Tutoring Program, sponsored by the PEA together with the School Volunteer Program and other city groups, to recruit tutors for seniors who failed the tests. But he did not make these efforts a priority, still feeling strongly that the correct policy was to delay implementing the new requirement until the system was ready to deal with it.

This disagreement over tactics, more than over basic principles and objectives, nevertheless, left the public confused. Clark, Yavner, and Badillo were for "standards." Macchiarola sounded like most other educators trying to dodge an issue. This impression is no doubt unfair and unfortunate, but actions speak louder than words. Confronted with 5,000 young New Yorkers who hadn't learned basic skills, Macchiarola offered only a piece of paper.

The dispute has also left unclear Macchiarola's long-term strategy for responding to public pressure for minimum co npetency standards. Educators can respond in one of three ways: (1) behave as if the requirements will somehow go away, (2) accept them as a device to "screen out the failures"; or (3) use them as a lever to change the schools so that students *can* meet the requirements.

While Macchiarola's intentions for the long run clearly are most consistent with the third response, his actions and statements this year have sounded more like the first. As a result, he has missed an opportunity to use the minimum competency movement to help build strong public support for educational change. Without such support, the final result of minimum competency may be the one that neither he nor his critics want—to "screen out the failures," which is perhaps one step worse than giving them a meaningless diploma.

The chancellor's Task Force on Promotional Policies provides another example of continued lack of clarity on academic standards. This task force was formed in November 1978 in response to two initiatives: Mayor Koch's mandate to end "social promotions" and the Board of Education's resolution of May 1978 calling on the new chancellor to come up with recommendations for new high school graduation standards by April 1, 1979. The task force, made up of school and union officials and representatives of the PEA, United Parents Associations, and other education organizations, was set up with a proposed deadline of January 15, 1979, for submitting recommendations.

The first papers prepared by the chancellor's staff focused on the test scores children would need to pass from one grade to the next. When it was pointed out that the test publishers themselves said proposed grade equivalent scores were unreliable for this purpose, it became clear that the determination of when a child should be held back, promoted, or shifted to an alternative class is much more complicated than just adopting city-wide test score standards. Even more challenging is the question of how to ensure that if a child is held back or shifted to an alternative class it is not because of a failure of the school. The group was facing nothing less than a fundamental overhaul of the instructional process, and it was clear not only that this task had to be done but that it was beyond the capability of an *ad hoc* task force meeting sporadically over a few weeks.

The context had shifted significantly from the previous year when Anker had called for "tougher" graduation standards but did not propose changes in the education program so that students would have a chance to meet them. The Anker proposal, clearly a "screen out the failures" approach, was widely condemned as a policy that would only increase the already disastrous dropout rate without improving education. The Macchiarola task force, on the other hand, has been groping its way toward a "let's make sure everyone learns" approach, but it is finding how huge this task is. As of this writing, the new policies remain unsettled.

The growing public pressure for minimum competency standards for public school students requires nothing short of a thoroughgoing transformation of the philosophy and operation of urban public schools. We can no longer automatically promote students but we cannot hold them back indefinitely either. The only other choice is to make sure they do learn so they can move forward. Currently, there is little confidence that urban school systems can be reorganized to accomplish this goal. A key ingredient still missing is a *shared vision* of an educational system in which every child can fulfill his or her fundamental need to learn and fundamental right to be properly taught.

A Shared Vision

Without a vision that is shared, without concerns and aspirations that are truly mutual, relations are at best arrangements of convenience, and at worst the joint confinement of unwilling partners, ... [24]

Too many relationships in urban school systems are "arrangements of convenience" or even a "joint confinement of of unwilling partners." We need not only new policies and practices but also new attitudes of cooperation and common goals before our educational problems can be solved. As the chancellor states in his *Mid-Year Report*: "We are dependent, every one of us, upon the help of others, and the strength provided by a giving and sharing community is indispensable for New York City's children today."

He states a basic truth about education that has been neglected in building our huge education bureaucracies. But it will continue to be neglected so long as we define the primary goal of education as Macchiarola did in his *Mid-Year Report*: "the effective, efficient, and economic *delivery* of educational services to children" (emphasis added). Education is *not* "delivered" by the teacher to the student, by the school to the family, or by the school system to the community. Education must be a community enterprise, not simply a commodity delivered by an insulated bureaucracy. [25]

Underlying the challenges facing Macchiarola—and other urban school system leaders—is the need to create a sense of community around education. Citizens and the communities in which they raise their children must feel the schools are *their* schools, for which they too bear a responsibility.

Obstacles to Unity

It is not hard to list the obstacles to creating a sense of community about education in New York City. We have a legacy of conflict, but even if we did not, the city would remain one of the most heterogeneous conglomerations of ethnic, religious, and social groups in the world. In that context, specific problems stand ready to breed conflict.

Limited resources. Not only does the tug-of-war continue between funds for increased staff benefits and for services to children, but so do conflicts among parents over how much to spend for handicapped children and for "regular" children, how much for transportation versus instructional services, how much to put into "deprived" areas at the expense of acceptable standards in middle-class neighborhoods. The amount and the value of the available dollars are shrinking as the student population shrinks. While the enrollment decline relieves the pressure for money somewhat, it also generates conflicting options of closing schools or laying off staff. Given the very real interests at stake, New Yorkers have remained relatively calm up until now, but if conditions continue to get worse, the conflict over resources could be substantial.

Employee Unions. The bitterness over the school busdrivers strike this spring was only a taste of what might be in store if union conflict spreads. Unions are beginning to say they have sacrificed enough, that it is time for them to make substantial gains again. There is no indication, however, that there will be enough money to pay for such gains without further cutting services for children.

Parents are also becoming more militant against further cuts in services and say their children also have sacrificed enough. Parents want programs restored that are taken for granted in suburban school systems, such as counseling services and organized sports. Under these circumstances, strikes are not likely to be productive, and yet the unions may feel forced to strike—as the UFT did in 1975—to no one's advantage. The potential for labor strife is great and may be growing.

Race relations. With 70% of the students in the city schools black or Hispanic and the staff still overwhelmingly white, there remains a high risk of racial conflict. Macchiarola has some handicaps in dealing with this problem because he came from a district that hired almost no blacks (he says it had little opportunity to do so), and because his patron, Mayor Koch, is having his own problems with the city's black leadership. The chancellor, however, has asked to be judged by his deeds, and he has not done badly. His residency requirement for staff and his denial of tenure to the 79 supervisors, most of whom were white, suggest that he is willing to stand up to the unions.

Macchiarola still faces serious tests, such as legal challenges over student segregation, and a particularly knotty problem, already discussed, of staff hiring and assignment practices growing out of litigation and federal findings of discrimination. He also faces the suspicion of black and Hispanic parents and leaders that the school system not only has failed to serve their children but has no real intentions of changing the situation. The distrust, based on bitter experience, runs deep.

Decentralization—again. For the past several years the issue of decentralization has been dormant. The antagonists of 1968 and 1969 are eager *not* to revive the destructive conflicts of ten years ago. Nevertheless, the issue is beginning to resurface. The state legislature is considering a "study" of the question, and rumors are circulating that at least some members of the Board of Regents think it is time to roll back decentralization. Others even believe that Macchiarola himself has tendencies toward centralized power, although he has strongly defended the decentralized system every time the question has been raised.

There is every reason to improve the inadequate decentralization plan enacted in 1969, and also every reason to make sure that whatever is done does not merely open up old wounds. Any changes should be made only after careful study and a dispassionate effort to find out how to make the system work better for children.

The Educational Priorities Panel has begun a review, directed by Dr. David Rogers of New York University, of a sample of community districts. Rogers is examining the districts' management styles and their relationships with headquarters. Some changes to improve the system can be made by administrative or board decision at the city level; others may require action by the state legislature. But every effort should be made to ensure that the legislature and the Board of Regents do not simply fan the embers of this old issue.

Macchiarola's style. To the dismay of many involved in efforts to revitalize the schools, the new chancellor's personal style seems to be an obstacle to developing a sense of unity. While he has so far avoided serious public flareups, I noted earlier that personal animosities have already developed between him and key leaders in City Hall and in Albany. It always takes two to fight, and those with whom he is at cross-purposes—such as Badillo and Yavner—have not gone out of their way to avoid conflict. Nevertheless, the issues are too serious and the goals too important to be jeopardized by personal animosities.

Several people who have had contacts with Chancellor Macchiarola report that

while he has demonstrated great courage and determination, he also tends not to listen to what others are saying and to be peevish when crossed. His task clearly requires extraordinary strength, but it must be strength tempered with sensitivity.

Paths to Unity

While there are many obstacles to developing a greater sense of unity, there are also opportunities. In individual schools—both regular and alternative—a sense of community has been forged among students, parents, teachers, administrators, custodial staff, and, in some cases, the larger community. In the alternative schools, the sense of shared purpose often results from the school's having been *chosen* by students or their parents. In the regular neighborhood schools, the sense of community is almost always forged by the principal. In both instances, there are marked increases in evidence of loyalty to the school, in cooperation among participants, and in the energies released to meet school goals. The hope is that under the various new initiatives touched on above to increase joint planning at the school level more such approaches will be developed.

The community school districts also provide a potential area for developing a shared vision and a sense of community, even though virtually none of the community school district boundaries was drawn to conform to definable communities, and the decentralization law was written in a way that almost guaranteed community strife. District 10 in the Bronx, for instance, is proud not only of its academic achievement (despite the rapid influx of poor families from the South Bronx) but also of its community feeling, which it celebrates every year with two days of festivities at Lincoln Center where the schools and students show off their accomplishments.

Even some districts that experienced bitter struggles in the past have begun to build a sense of common purpose. District 1, in Manhattan's Lower East Side, was the scene of great turmoil before the decentralization law and, in the first years under the law, saw almost open warfare between Puerto Rican parents and the teachers union over control of the district. It has more recently gotten a different board majority and a new superintendent who want to forget the battles of the past and work together with the community for positive educational change.

Brooklyn's Ocean Hill-Brownsville, also the scene of near civil war before decentralization, in the first years of the new system saw a bitter struggle between local parent and community groups on the one hand and a controlling alliance of the teachers union and local politician Samuel Wright on the other. Today, however, the district is moving to repair the damage of those years and to concentrate on improved academic achievement under a new board majority and superintendent.

Community turmoil would no doubt be reduced by a system of elections that favored participation by parents rather than control by local political forces. (The system originally recommended by the Bundy panel called for the majority of board members to be chosen by parents.) Nonetheless, despite the handicaps communities have faced, unity forged from participation and struggle has proved more beneficial for education than overly centralized control.

On a citywide basis, a sense of community may seem to be unattainable, given the size and diversity of the city's population. Chancellor Macchiarola has indicated, in his *Mid-Year Report* and elsewhere, that he would welcome a citywide sense of community spirit, but it is not clear that he sees it as one of his functions to generate this spirit. He has said his job is to run the school system and run it well. Perhaps it is up to the mayor, other political leaders, and civic and parent groups to forge a citywide community spirit.

Two developments indicate that a growing spirit of cooperation and commitment to education on a citywide basis may be forming. As mentioned before, under the sponsorship of the Board of Regents, all of the citywide education groups and agencies, including the unions, parent groups such as the United Parents Associations and citizen groups such as the PEA and Urban League, have been meeting for over a year to develop a common approach to the problems of public education in the city. While there are still disagreements among these groups, there is also a growing consensus that academic achievement must be improved and can be through more effective accountability at the school level. The idea is hardly new, but the agreement on it reflects a shared interest in making schools successful, which can outweigh the differences that have divided these groups in recent years.

A second development is the emerging consensus in the city in response to the minimum competency movement. Even though Macchiarola's initial response to the new state basic competency tests was to plead for more time, the growing agreement in the city was that there was no choice but to go forward with a full commitment to "competency for all," starting with the cooperative efforts of schools and community organizations to help seniors learn the skills needed to pass the competency tests. Indeed, the tutoring efforts this spring paid off as most tutored students passed the test in June. But more important is the efforts' symbolic significance—reflecting, for the first time in many years, a joint school-community commitment to a common objective.

Conclusion

New Yorkers are still left with the gnawing question: What if Macchiarola fails? That is the wrong question. There is no way Macchiarola, or any chancellor, can "save" the public schools. He can make the changes that have to be made only if New Yorkers want them badly enough to fight the inevitable battles and provide the necessary support.

As the Committee for Economic Development has pointed out, the prime problem in governmental ineffectiveness is not lack of knowledge or technology but lack of *will* to put into effect what is known.[26] The will needed to reform the New York City public school system (or any large urban school system), cannot be generated by one person. The job is too massive, the obstacles too great.

In the end, the battle to change the schools is a political battle. The hope of the Macchiarola administration comes not only from the quality and commitment of the man but also from his public mandate to reform the school system. As yet, this mandate is vague and uncertain. It is up to the people of New York City to make sure it is strengthened and forged into an irresistible force that will persist until the job is done. Under Macchiarola's leadership, the job *can* be done.

Notes

1. Samuel Polatnick, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, January 27, 1979, p. 20

2. David S. Seeley and Adele Spier, "Productivity in New York City's Schools: Fiscal Reality *and* Educational Quality," *City Almanac*, vol. II, no. 3, October 1976. The order and designations of the six areas have been changed slightly for the purposes of the present analysis.

3. Ibid., p. 9.

4. Nat Hentoff, "Testing Your Local Teachers – Before It's Too Late," *Village Voice*, March 12, 1979, p. 33.

5. Polatnick, *New York Times*.

6. Some of the important studies are: George Strayer and Louis Yavner, *Administrative Management of the School System of New York City*, Mayor's Committee on Management Survey, vol. 2, October 1951; Mark C. Schinnerer, *Report to New York State Commissioner of Education on New York City School Reorganization*, December 1961; and Commission on Human Rights, City of New York, *Equal Employment Opportunities and the New York City Public Schools*, 1971.

7. *The Fleischmann Report on the Quality, Cost, and Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in New York State* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

8. Pauline S. Rauh, "Helping Teacher: A Model for Staff Development," *Teachers College Record*, vol. 80, no. 1, September 1978, pp. 157-71.

9. Seeley and Spier, "Productivity in New York City's Schools," p. 10.

10. *Reconnection for Learning: A Community School System for New York City*, Mayor's Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, 1967.

11. Donald A. Erickson and Theodore Reller, eds., *The Principal in Metropolitan Schools* (Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1979).

12. Seeley and Spier, "Productivity in New York City's Schools," p. 13.

13. Lawrence A. Cremin, *Public Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 62.

14. Jacob B. Michaelsen, "Revision, Bureaucracy, and School Reform," *School Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, February 1977.

15. Interface, *A Survey of Early Intervention Programs in New York State*, Report to the New York State Council on Children and Families, 1978.

16. See Public Education Association, *Toward a Total Learning Community*, April 1977.

17. Frank J. Macchiarola, *Mid-Year Report of the Chancellor of Schools to the New York City Board of Education*, January 1979, p. 6.

18. Myron Lieberman, "Eggs That I Have Laid: Teacher Bargaining Reconsidered," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 60, no. 6, February 1979, pp. 415-19.

19. Macchiarola, *Mid-Year Report*, p. 17.

20. *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 59, no. 9, May 1978, special issue on "Minimum Competency Testing: Can the States Legislate Literacy?"; Jeanne Chall, "Minimum Competency in Reading: An Informal Survey of the States," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 69, no. 5, January 1979, pp. 351-52.

21. Evans Clinchy and Elisabeth Allen Cady, "If Not Public Choice, Then Private Escape," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 69, no. 4, December 1978.

22. New York City Board of Education, Office of Educational Evaluation, *Preliminary Report on Transitional Classes*, February 1979.

23. Polatnick, *New York Times*.

24. Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 24th Annual High Holy Day Message, reprinted in *New York Times*, November 7, 1978, p. 39.

25. Many scholars and observers of education are arriving at this conclusion; see, for example: Cremin, *Public Education*; George Gallup, "The First Ten Years: Trends and Observations" in Stanley M. Elam, ed., *A Decade of Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education, 1969-1978* (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan, 1978); J.W. Getzels, "Socialization and Education: A Note on Discontinuities" in Hope Jensen Leichter, ed., *The Family as Educator* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974); Hope Jensen Leichter, "Families and Communities as Educators: Some Concepts of Relationship," *Teachers College Record*, vol. 79, no. 4, May 1978, pp. 567-658; and Edward McDill and Leo C. Rigsby, *Structure and Process in Secondary Schools: The Academic Impact of Educational Climates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

26. Committee for Economic Development, *Improving Productivity in State and Local Government*, New York, 1976.

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Note to Readers

City Almanac apologizes for the delay in publishing this issue, which, despite its February 1979 date, is being distributed in July. As we advised you in our last issue, the editors are accelerating preparation of forthcoming issues in order to bring *City Almanac* back on schedule as soon as possible.

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